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ABSTRACT

Although the practice of journeying to a foreign country for educational purposes has an ancient history, it has only recently had a great impact on American higher education. A rapid increase in the number of programs and the number of student participants began in the mid-1950's and continues presently. This research project was conducted during the 1972-73 academic year with students who participated in study abroad programs. Its purpose was to increase the understanding of the effects of study abroad on American students. Participants represented a variety of backgrounds, interests and characteristics and most were juniors. The claims that study abroad results in significant changes toward more international, liberal, open-minded, self-confident attitudes were not supported by the study's findings. Also, the theory that direct contact with a foreign people results in more positive attitudes toward them was not only not supported, but the opposite result was discovered. The results indicate that student's perceptions of the host country became more realistic and, therefore, less positive during the stay abroad. This research project was designed to accomplish the following purposes: to indicate what types of students change in what ways; as an aid in the selection of students for study abroad; to indicate the relationships between certain experiences and situations while abroad with attitude and value changes; as an aid in structuring study abroad programs; and to stimulate further research in this field. (Author/PG)

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EVALUATION OF STUDY ABROAD

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Although the practice of journeying to a foreign country for educational purposes has an ancient history, it has only recently had a great impact on American higher education. While some American students, primarily graduate students, attended the great European universities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the idea of a foreign educational experience for undergraduates really began with the Junior year abroad programs which first developed in the mid- and late-1920's. Between 1919 and 1955, however, less than 2,000 Americans had studied abroad.

A rapid increase in the number of programs and the number of student participants began in the mid-1950's and continues presently. In 1956, there were 1,000 American students abroad and this number had increased to 10,000 in over 300 programs by 1968. In addition, the programs began to expand to countries other than in Europe during the 1960's.

Until the mid-1950's, the small number of undergraduates who did study abroad were usually students from wealthy families and often had a special interest in improving their foreign language ability. Irwin Abrams observed, however, that "study abroad for Americans is no longer the province of the few -- the well-to-do and the specialist -- but it is coming to be an accepted instrument for the general education of the many."[1]

HE 005 306

A number of claims have been made as to the effects of study abroad on the students who participate. Ingrid Eide suggested that "direct contact with a foreign people breaks down the stereotype of national character which occupied the mind of the visitor before he left home."[2] A journal article by Kelman and Bailyn included the conclusion that "experience in a foreign country exposes an individual to a variety of influences that may challenge his existing attitudes and values. These experiences may lead to varying degrees of attitude change."[3] John and Ruth Useem observed that "the process of living and studying in another society produces diverse effects on the individual's conception of himself and of his roles. A comparative view engenders a fresh perspective and presents a new model by which persons judge their own society."[4] Other sources claim that study abroad results in greater awareness of cultural relativity, increased open-mindedness, a more international view of the world, and increased maturity and independence for the students who participate.

However, as Weidner pointed out, "there is surprisingly little in the way of measurements of the results achieved through study abroad."[5] The point was further emphasized by Richard Morris when he referred to "the lack of substantial previous research on cross-cultural education"[6] and by Gogh and McCormick who agreed that "there is exceedingly little empirically established data"[7] in this field. Margaret Cormack concluded that while there have been some significant research studies conducted with foreign students in the U.S., "very few studies have been made of Americans studying abroad."[8]

RESEARCH PROJECT

In order to increase the understanding of the effects of study abroad on American college students, a research project was conducted during the 1972-73 academic year with students who participated in University of Colorado study abroad programs in England, Italy, Germany, and France. The programs in England, Germany , and France lasted for a full academic year with the students taking regular classes in the foreign university. The program in Italy was a special one-semester program for students without advanced language ability and these students did not participate in the regular classes of the foreign university.

Participants represented a variety of backgrounds, interests, and characteristics and most were Juniors. Except for a small number from the University of Kansas and University of Nebraska in the French program, the students attended the University of Colorado. Of the 110 participants who finished their programs, ninety completed all of the measuring instruments used in this study and these ninety students comprised the sample for this study.

Each of the ninety participants completed an Antecedents Questionnaire, a Transactions Questionnaire, and the pretest and posttest of several attitude scales. The Antecedents Questionnaire was filled out before the students departed for their stay abroad and provided the following information: sex, age, number of brothers and sisters, in-state or out-of-state residence, socio-economic status, grade point average, number of semester hours completed, number of different college living situations, previous foreign travel, whether or not had a girlfriend or boyfriend, social or non-social orientation as to interests and activities, religion, academic major, and career plans.

The Transactions Questionnaire was completed at the end of their stay abroad and provided information about the following experiences and situations encountered during the stay abroad: number of countries visited, number of different living situations, number of visits in a private home, foreign language ability, whether or not lived with a host family, number of host friends, number of American friends, number of other foreign student friends, percentage of the living unit composed of host people -- of Americans -- and of other foreign students, social or non-social orientation as to activities and interests abroad, and country of study abroad.

The pretest was completed before going abroad and the posttest at the end of the stay for instruments which measured degree of internationalism, open or closed-mindedness, radicalism-conservatism, self-assessment, perception of the host country, and perception of the U.S.

These measures provided antecedent, transactional, and outcome variables to be used in this study. The antecedent variables were the information from the Antecedents Questionnaire plus the pretest scores on the attitude scales. The transactional variables were the variables from the Transactions Questionnaire and the outcome variables were the change from pretest to posttest on the attitude scales.

Part correlation and analysis of covariance were used to measure the significance of the relationships between the antecedent and outcome variables and between the transactional and outcome variables. These techniques statistically equated the participants as to pretest differences so that the posttest scores reflected different amounts of change for each of the students on the outcome variables.

The scales measuring internationalism, radicalism-conservatism, and open and closed-mindedness consisted of statements which required

a decision by the respondent as to the degree of agreement or disagreement on a six-point continuum from agree very much to disagree very much. The scales measuring self-assessment, perception of the host country, and perception of the U.S. were constructed with the semantic differential technique which was developed by Charles Osgood and Associates.[9]

RESULTS

T-tests were computed to test the significance of the difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores for the sample of ninety students on the attitude scales. No significant differences were found between the pretest and posttest scores on any of the scales except the one which measured perception of the host country. The group became significantly less positive toward their host countries during their stay abroad.

The claims that study abroad results in significant changes toward more international, liberal, open-minded, self-confident attitudes were not supported by these findings. Also, the theory that direct contact with a foreign people results in more positive attitudes toward them was not only not supported, but the opposite result was discovered. A possible explanation of this is that the participants in this study went abroad with unrealistically high expectations about the host country. The results indicate that these perceptions of the host country became more realistic and, therefore, less positive during the stay abroad.

The purpose of this research project, however, was to go beyond these overall changes for the group as a whole and to investigate the relationships between the antecedent and outcome variables and between

the transactional and outcome variables. A number of statistically significant relationships were found.

The type of students who became more dogmatic, or closed-minded, during their stay abroad were those who were more radical on the radical-conservatism pretest and those who visited fewer foreign countries during their stay abroad. The students who became more positive in their self-assessment were ones who had a less positive perception of the host country on the pretest and ones who visited more often in a private home while abroad.

Students who visited fewer countries,who lived with a host family, and who had fewer host friends and more American friends became more conservative. In comparison with students in England, those in France and Italy became more conservative.

The type of students who became more nationalistic were those who were younger, had only a fair or poor foreign language ability, experienced more than one type of living situation while abroad, had fewer host friends and more American friends, and lived in a living unit composed of a larger percentage of host people and a smaller percentage of either Americans or other foreign students. Foreign language majors became more nationalistic compared with humanities majors and those who were undecided about a career became more nationalistic than those in the law-medicine group or the "other" group.

Perception of the host country became relatively more favorable for students who listed socially-oriented activities at the time of the pretest and for their stay abroad, visited a greater number of countries, had only one type of living situation abroad, and had more host friends and fewer American or other foreign student friends. Protestants became more positive toward the host country compared with Catholics and those studying in England and Germany became more positive compared

with students in Italy. Also, students in Germany became more positive toward their host country than those in France.

The perception of the U.S. became more favorable for students who had fewer semester hours, were female, more nationalistic and more conservative on the pretests, had only fair or poor foreign language ability, lived with a host family, had more than one type of living situation abroad, had fewer host friends and more American friends, and engaged in activities of a non-social nature during their stay abroad. Students in France and Italy becme more positive toward the U.S. compared with those in England and Germany.

General Conclusions

In addition to these specific results, a number of general conclusions may be drawn. The transactional variables which had the greatest number of significant relationships with outcomes were country of study abroad (9), number of American friends (6), number of host friends (5), and number of countries visited (4). The antecedents with the greatest number of significant relationships with outcome variables were internationalism pretest score, academic major, in-state or out-of-state residence, sex, radicalism-conservatism pretest score, and perception of host country pretest score. These variables should be used in greater depth in future research.

There have been many claims that foreign travel leads to a more open-minded, liberalized viewpoint. The results support this by showing that students who visited a greater number of countries during their stay abroad became less dogmatic and less conservative compared with those who visited fewer countries. Students with only fair or poor foreign language ability became more nationalistic and more posi-

tive toward the U.S. compared with those who had a good language ability. This implies that difficulty with the language may have resulted in negative experiences in the host country and a reaction toward a more nationalistic, pro-U.S. viewpoint.

A similar conclusion may be drawn from the relationships between social or non-social interests and perceptions of the host country and of the U.S. Students who were more socially-oriented before they went abroad became more positive toward the host country. Those who engaged in socially-oriented activities during their stay abroad became more positive toward their host country and less positive toward the U.S. compared with those whose interests were mainly non-social. This may indicate that socially-oriented students became more positive toward their hosts because they could more effectively relate to the people. Students who were not as oriented to social types of activities may have had more trouble relating to host people and, therefore, developed a more negative perception of the host country.

Students who lived with a host family became more conservative and more positive toward the U.S. compared with those who did not. Also, those whose living unit was composed of a greater percentage of host people became more nationalistic, while students living with a greater percentage of Americans and other foreign students became more internationalistic. These findings imply that living with host nationals does not necessarily result in a more positive attitude toward them and may even result in a more conservative, nationalistic, pro-U.S. viewpoint. On the other hand, there seems to be a different relationship between friendship patterns and perceptions of the host country and of the U.S. Students who listed a greater number of host

friends became more radical, more internationally-oriented, more positive toward the host country, and less positive toward the U.S. Those who indicated a greater number of American friends became more conservative, more nationalistic, less positive toward the host country, and more positive toward the U.S.

Country of study abroad seems to have had a definite relationship with several related outcome variables. Students in England became more radical and less positive toward the U.S. than those in Italy and France and more positive toward the host country than those in Italy. Those studying in Germany became more positive toward the host country and less positive toward the U.S. than students in France or Italy. Also, the fact that foreign language majors became more nationalistic and humanities majors became more internationally-oriented may relate to the conclusions on study abroad since none of the students in England were foreign language majors and many were humanities majors.

In general, certain types of people became more conservative, more nationalistic, less positive toward the host country, and more positive toward the U.S., while other types became more radical, more international, more positive toward the host country, and less positive toward the U.S. Although it was possible for the participants to become more positive toward both the U.S. and the host country or less positive toward both, it seems that those who became more positive toward one would become less positive toward the other and vice-versa.

DISCUSSION

This research project was designed to accomplish the following purposes: to indicate what types of students change in what ways,

as an aid in the selection of students for study abroad; to indicate the relationships between certain experiences and situations while abroad with attitude and value changes, as an aid in the structuring of study abroad programs; and to stimulate further research in this field.

A number of significant relationships were found between the antecedent and outcome variables and this data may be useful to people in American colleges and universities who are responsible for selecting students to participate in study abroad programs. Also, a number of significant relationships were discovered between the transactional and outcome variables and these may be useful for those people who are responsible for planning and administering study abroad programs.

No recommendations are provided here as to what types of students should be selected or how study abroad programs should be structured because no evaluative judgements have been made as to what types of changes in values and attitudes are desirable or undesirable. The results of this study provide information which may be used by each institution in a manner which is consistent with the goals for the study abroad programs of that particular institution. For those institutions which have not determined goals for their programs as to attitude and value changes of the student participants, this study may stimulate them to consider whether there should be goals and, if so, what those goals should be.

Directions for Future Research

Since very few research projects have focused on attitude and value changes for American undergraduates who study abroad, this project was designed as a broad, scatter-shot approach with a large

number of diverse variables instead of an in-depth investigation of only a few variables. Rather than providing answers to a few major questions, it was hoped that the results of this study would generate many areas for possible future research.

The outcome variables which provide the best possibilities for future research are measures of radicalism-conservatism, internationalism, perception of the host country, and perception of the U.S. There seems to be a definite relationship between changes on these variables and certain of the antecedent and transactional variables. Although these patterns are not true in all cases, the types of students who became more conservative, more nationalistic, more negative toward the host country and more positive toward the U.S. were those who were not as socially-oriented in their activities and interests, had only a fair or poor command of the language of the host country, were more conservative and nationalistic on the pretest, had more American friends and fewer host friends, visited fewer countries during their stay abroad, and studied in France or Italy compared with England or Germany. The opposite types of students seemed to change in the opposite directions. It would be useful for future research to concentrate on these patterns by using other instruments which measure changes on the same four outcome variables and by including other related antecedent and transactional variables. Another possibility might be to study the relationships of these patterns with certain personality traits, as measured by established personality scales.

Although there were differences between the students who studied for one semester in Italy and those who studied for an academic year in the three other countries, it is impossible to determine whether

these differences were related more to the country of study abroad or to the length of stay. A possibility for further research might be to compare a group which studies for an academic year with a similar group which studies in the same country for a different length of time, such as one semester. This type of comparison was not attempted here because the University of Colorado did not sponsor two programs of differing length in the same European country.

The results indicate that country of study abroad is an important factor, especially in regards to perception of the host country and perception of the U.S. Future research might attempt to determine the factors associated with different countries which produce these different reactions.

Previous research indicates that close daily contact with people of another culture usually leads to a more positive attitude toward them. Although the results of this study indicate a positive correlation of the number of host friends with attitudes which are less conservative, more international, more positive toward the host country, and less positive toward the U.S., those who lived with a host family became more conservative and pro-U.S. and those who lived with a greater percentage of host people became more nationalistic. This contradiction might be explained by a research project which went into greater depth on this issue.

Another question that should be studied in greater depth is why students who became less positive in their perception of the host country became more positive towards the U.S. and vice-versa. The two concepts are measured on separate scales and it is possible for one's perception to become more favorable on both scales or less favorable on both.

Another possibility for future research might be the same type of research design with different antecedent, transactional, and outcome variables. Still another possibility might be a comparison of study abroad participants with a similar group of students who remain at the American college or university as to changes in attitudes and values.

One of the major implications of this study is that the study abroad experience may have more influence in reinforcing attitudes than in changing attitudes. For example, students who are more conservative and nationalistic before the experience tend to increase in that direction and those who have a more international and radical orientation increase in that direction. This may be due to the fact that study abroad is an intense experience and may cause a defensive reaction in those students who find the culture shock too severe. Further research might concentrate on discovering the relationship between certain personality characteristics and the tendency to be open to new experiences.

Relationship of Findings to Previous Research

Much of the literature refers to the influence of study abroad on self-assessment. Although there may have been a change in self-assessment for the group as a whole, differences in change on the Self-Assessment Scale were found for only one transactional and one antecedent variable. Also, academic ability is often mentioned as an important factor in the adjustment of foreign students. However, there were no significant relationships between grade point average and any of the outcome variables used in this study.

Much of the literature indicates that attitudes, especially

those toward the host country, are related to the person's adjustmental process. Ability to interact, freindship patterns, language ability, age, socio-economic status, field of study, and the degree of difference between the home and host countries were cited as influences on adjustment. The results of this study do indicate that these variables influence students' attitudes and perceptions. For example, friendship patterns, language ability, and country of study abroad were related to perception of the host country.

Herman and Schild[10] found that a foreign student's association with other foreign students had a significant effect on attitudes toward the host country. The results of the present project indicate that students who had a greater number of other foreign student friends became less positive toward the host country. Morris[11] reported that students with a greater number of host friends had a more positive view of the host country. This was supported by the results of the present research.

Several previous research studies found that the student's preconceptions had an important influence on his views of the host country. The findings of this project imply that certain students may have become less favorable toward the host country because their preconceptions were unrealistically high and they reacted negatively when these expectations were not met.

Finally, the literature indicates that favorableness toward the host country is affected by the perceived status accorded the student's home country by the host nationals. Since the French have traditionally been less favorable toward Americans than the Germans or English have been, this principle may explain why those studying in France became less positive toward the host country compared with those studying in Germany or England.

In summary, this research has attempted to provide information which may be used to improve study abroad programs and which may stimulate further research in this area. Study abroad provides a viable alternative for students, teachers, and administrators who are searching for ways to make learning more meaningful in higher education. It is hoped that this research will contribute to that goal.

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